

**REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 3, 2010**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Wednesday, November 3, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Manousos, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann. Absent: Councilors Kotkin and McAlister.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, Nancy Stilwell, Director of Youth and Social Services and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Councilor Manousos led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PRESENTATION

Susan Kopecki, an art teacher at Highcrest Elementary School, had visited our sister city, Nagayo, Japan this past summer and gave a presentation of her visit.

Councilor Roberts thanked Susan Kopecki for her presentation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING - Social Services Block Grant

Donna Hemmann asked if anyone wanted to comment on the Social Services Block Grant. There was no public comment and hearing was closed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Gary Decko, 20 Casey Lane, commented on the land between Casey Lane and Middletown Avenue and the possibility of selling the land. Mr. Decko read a prepared statement to the Council. See Addendum 1.

Pamela Brooks, 22 Casey Lane, commented on the land between Casey Lane and Middletown Avenue and the disposition of this property. She noted that the property is not routinely maintained unless a call is made by a town resident. She also noted that this land was granted by the State to the Town and there may be stipulations to selling the property.

Bob Woodward, 456 Middletown Avenue, commented on his opposition to any development of the property between Casey Lane and Middletown Avenue.

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street, commented on the recent election and felt it was important that incumbents be challenged and that citizens stay involved. Barbara Ruhe thanked everyone who encouraged and helped her in her campaign.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, inquired about what is done with the wood after a tree is cut down on town property. Gus Colantonio noted that he had previously asked what was done with the wood and was told that the wood is put through a wood chipper and disposed of. Gus Colantonio asked why this wood isn't made available for people to take and burn in their own homes.

Steve Belienda, 141 Fox Hill Road, noted that he is a member of the Board of Wethersfield Youth Football and noted that the biggest asset most people have is their house and one way to maintain and enhance their property is to provide some form of quality of life to the residents. New people looking to move to Wethersfield look at what the town has to offer. Steve Belienda noted that although he does not use the dog park, or the skateboard park, or has any children who play high school soccer or football, he still supports these activities because it enhances the quality of life in Wethersfield. He recently took his 10 year old son to a football game at Berlin High School that was played under the lights. He commented that it was standing room only and there were people from all over – football families, cheerleading families, scouts and news people. People coming into town for a night game under the lights would be frequenting the businesses, gas stations and other areas businesses. He asked for the support from the Town Council to ensure that the lights at Cottone Field be installed and the project completed.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on the presentation done by Susan Kopecki and noted that it was very interesting. He noted that he believed she had said that there are 35 to 45 students per class in Japan and he commented that the students in Japan are scoring better than the students in the United States and the United States has 20 students in a classroom. He also noted that there are a high number of students that are going to community colleges that need to take remedial classes. Robert Young also commented on the sale of town owned land and asked what would be done with the money raised from the sale of the properties and wondered if it would be used to fund the lights at Cottone Field. Robert Young also commented on the lights at Cottone Field.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Manousos reported for the Budget and Finance Committee and stated that the committee met with the actuary regarding the Town's medical benefits liability. The Town's medical benefits liability is approaching \$64 million. There is a need to set up a trust account to prefund these future medical benefits for the employees which will decrease the unfunded liability. At this time, money is being placed in a reserve account but this is not considered an asset under this analysis. There will be a catch up transition period until that happens. The question is how this account will be set up. One possibility would be to phase it in over a five year period. He noted that the Town Manager is presently looking into this.

Councilor Manousos also reported for the Lights for Cottone Field Committee and noted that to date, approximately \$18,000 has been raised in cash and pledges by 130 families. The committee will be meeting again and expects to have a proposal that will be presented to the Council for consideration.

Councilor Manousos reported for the Public Works Committee in Councilor McAlister's absence. He reported that the Committee had inventoried all town owned land and was looking at small parcels of land that did not serve as a typical park/large open space. Four properties were initially targeted and notices were sent out to residents within 300 feet of the parcel properties. He noted that the Committee struggles with coming to an agreement on disposal recommendations on all properties except for Savage Park and have agreed to move forward with the proposal to bid out Savage Park and join it with Corpus Christi parcel to make it more attractive to a business. With the other three parcels, the Committee has recognized that this land has become an extension of people's backyards and this is an emotionally charged issue. In terms of benefits to the Town, there is an estimated one time revenue generation of \$250,000 and a total increase of anywhere between \$13,000 and \$52,000 yearly. The general decision that needs to be made is if this Council has the appetite to dispose of properties that can offer a one time revenue generation, ongoing tax revenue and lower maintenance costs. If so, what would be the parameters, conditions for such a case be.

Councilor Manousos also presented a report on the Energy Plan in Councilor McAlister's absence and commented that progress has been made in proposing formal acceptance. One update is that the Town has started to compile a complete inventory of street lights to look for opportunities to reduce duplicate lights and save money. Second, there will be a request at an upcoming Council meeting to use funds from the existing Energy Conservation account of approximately \$11,500 to perform a hydroelectric feasibility study on Murphy and Bellpond dams. Third, the Energy Committee has drafted an RFP in support of a performance contracting consultant who will work on obtaining a performance contract for the town that will provide guaranteed savings. The Town Manager will be moving this along.

Councilor Manousos reported that numbers for the updated blue recycling containers were presented and the Town Manager will go over these numbers.

Councilor Roberts reported that the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee met on October 21. She noted that there is supposed to be a Clergy on the Committee but to date they have been unsuccessful in filling this slot. There has also been an issue with Dial-A-Ride in which pickups are late and Nancy Stilwell is working on this matter.

Councilor Hurley noted that the Youth Advisory Board is looking for members and for anyone who is interested to please contact Nancy Stilwell.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Drake wanted to add to the Public Works report regarding that the four parcels of land and noted that the concept is not to raise money, but to look at open space and determine whether or not something can be done with it. The properties that they cannot come to an agreement to is (1) Westlook Road, in the northwestern part of town has the potential to have two houses built on it. The decision would then be whether or not this is wanted. Second, the Crest Street property

neighbors want to keep this as open space, and third, the Middletown Avenue property neighbors also want to keep the space open.

Councilor Roberts mentioned that on November 17, 2010, the Safe Graduation Committee will be holding a clothing drive as a fundraiser.

Councilor Drake noted that the gate on the Wilkus Farm property has a "Private Property" sign on it that needs to be removed.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he has been visiting establishments in Town to see their operations. He visited Wingsite, which is next to CVS on the Silas Deane Highway makes event showcases that are shipped around the world and Hart Seed Company on Main Street in Old Wethersfield. Deputy Mayor Console also noted with regards to the prefunding of the Medical Benefits that was reported by Councilor Manousos, it will be roughly a \$2.5 to a \$2.8 million increase on a yearly basis that the Town will need to come up with over 23 years to get caught up with and this will need to be taken into consideration when doing the budget. Deputy Mayor Console also had a CD disc of the work done on Middletown Avenue and noted that some of the residents are having issues with getting into and out of their driveways because of the pitch. He suggested that the Engineering Department review this issue now so that it will not turn into another Morrison Avenue type situation.

Deputy Mayor Console asked Councilor Manousos that when he was speaking about the Lights for Cottone Field Committee, did he mean Wethersfield Youth Organization or is it a different organization, and does it have a name.

Councilor Manousos responded that the Lights for Cottone Field Committee is organized by Tom Ragonese that is trying to reorganize and re-energize people to privately fund the lights. Councilor Manousos also noted that this committee does not have a name but it is not affiliated with the Town.

Deputy Mayor Console also noted that globally, every month the deficit increases \$100 billion.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that she was invited to march in the Thomas Hooker Parade by Mayor Segarra, and she dressed up as an Onion Maiden and carried a basket of red onions. She also noted that she was the only representative from the surrounding area and added that it was an interesting experience. Chairperson Hemmann also noted that she attended the 15th Anniversary of the Dutch Point Credit Union. She also reminded everyone that the Central Connecticut Health District will be holding their Flu Vaccination Clinic on Thursday, November 4 at the Wethersfield Community Center from 3:00 to 6:00 and there will also be an Emergency Team Drill being held at the Wethersfield Town Hall on Thursday, November 4 in Council Chambers with regards to emergency operations.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges reported that the council packages include a spreadsheet that reflects the difference in recycling and trash disposal in quantities in year to date. Assistant Town Manager RaeAnn Palmer has asked Physical Services to compile a year to date review of costs and expenses and decreases in spending for trash removal. Jeff Bridges also reported that the Town and the owners of the Weight Watchers property have signed an agreement to undertake a redevelopment process of the property. The Town has asked and received permission from MDC to utilize the quarterly utility bills for informational numbers of Wethersfield residents. The Central Connecticut Solid Waste Authority has done a final version of the request for proposal for solid waste disposal services, and is under final review. Jeff Bridges also thanked Assistant Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, police officers, firemen and town staff for their work with completing the work of the rebanding. Jeff Bridges also reported on the location of a V Rad Box, that per a request from easement on Wolcott Hill Road, are working with an alternative location that won't be so readily viable to the public. Jeff Bridges also noted that there is a Resolution Authorizing Social Services Block Grant that had not been included previously in the Councilors' packets.

Councilor Manousos asked Town Manager Jeff Bridges to comment on the Wethersfield Youth Organization.

Jeff Bridges noted he was requested to review the Wethersfield Youth Organization activity and the Wethersfield Youth Organization PAC staff compared the expenses the Town took in and sent out relative to the design of the lighting systems and then reviewed the political expense statements of the PAC and found no overlaps between the organizations. The PAC did conduct activities relative to the referendum, but those referendum expenses do not show up in the expenses or income relative to the lights project.

Councilor Manousos asked if a lot of time was spent by him or his staff.

Jeff Bridges responded that it was time well spent.

COUNCIL ACTION

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS FOR ACTION

Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ACCEPT THE APPOINTMENT OF JOHN F. DOLAN, OF 560 WOLCOTT HILL ROAD, AS A MEMBER OF THE INSURANCE COMMITTEE from 11-03-2010 to 06-30-2015,"** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console. .

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Councilor Drake moved **"TO ACCEPT THE SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$8,977,"** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges reported that this is an annual social services block grant and that Nancy Stillwell, Director of Youth and Social Services would comment further.

Nancy Stillwell, Director of Social and Youth Services, explained that the Town has been receiving this Block Grant for 26 or 27 years from the Department of Social Services. This grant supports case management for elderly people who are at or below 50% of the poverty level, which is \$16,245 for a single person. This helps people to stay in their homes by coordinating services for them by helping them access services available through private and state services.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Deputy Mayor Console, moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO ACCEPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2011 COMPREHENSIVE DUI ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM GRANT OF \$21,353”** seconded by Councilor Drake.

Jeff Bridges reported the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT-DOT) receives Federal Highway Safety Funds to support driving under the influence (DUI) law enforcement initiatives at the local level. CT-DOT offers grants to Towns for DUI Enforcement around most major holidays and will cover 75 percent of the overtime costs to staff the enforcement operation. The Police Department can cover the remaining 25 percent from their current overtime budget. The total amount of the program is \$28,471 with \$21,353 available from the grant and \$7,118 from the Police budget. The Police Department requests that the Town Council authorize acceptance of this grant which the Department of Transportation has approved. The attached memorandum from Lieutenant David Scales provides you information about the success of this program in the past.

Councilor Drake inquired as to how the overtime is calculated for future pension obligations.

Jeff Bridges explained that each employee pays a portion of their salary into the pension fund.

Councilor Drake asked if the overtime skews it to higher level.

Jeff Bridges responded that any expense relative to the payroll will impact the pension, whether or not it is this number or a smaller number. Every year the actuary looks at payroll performance, long term liability, what employees pay in and what the Town pays in and comes up with the normal costs and that is the Town's contribution.

Councilor Manousos added that this only affects police officers who are in their last three years of service.

Councilor Drake noted that this is not free money and it costs the Town money in the long run.

Councilor Montinieri added that when the Chief talked about the overtime budget during budget session, the amount of money that is set aside for police budget for overtime is pre-determined in the budget and is built in, so this program will cover up to the 75%.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO REJECT ALL BIDS – BITUMINOUS MATERIALS,”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

Jeff Bridges reported after soliciting and reviewing bids for quarry and bituminous materials, staff has determined that the Town can obtain more advantageous pricing through utilization of the State of Connecticut bid. Staff is therefore requesting that Town Council reject all bids for Quarry and Bituminous Materials.

Councilor Montinieri noted that no back-up was attached to the proposals and requested a copy of the back-up.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, explained that there will be changes to the chapters and that copies will be available at the Town Clerk's Office.

1. Chapter 122 – Property Maintenance – to be revised
2. Chapter 73 – Enforcement – change from Citation Board to Citation Officer
3. Chapter 108 – Nuisances – to be reviewed
4. Chapter 157 – Article III Parking

Chairperson Hemmann also noted that a STEAP Grant acceptance and the Authorization for Defined Contribution Plan will be introduced at the next council meeting.

MINUTES

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF October 18, 2010”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Deputy Mayor Console inquired on page 4 where Councilor Manousos spoke of the Lights Committee and asked Councilor Manousos to confirm that this committee is not associated with the Wethersfield Youth Organization.

Councilor Manousos responded that the Lights Committee is an independent committee and not legally formed.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, noted that people have spoken that the quality of life in Wethersfield and how the lights at Cottone Field will enhance the quality of life in Wethersfield. Mr. Ruhe noted that he drove through the parking lot last Friday night when lights were rented for a football game and noted that there were cars parked all over the grass and islands and the police who were supposed to be patrolling the area and monitoring the traffic were watching the game. He advised people to be aware of whether or not they are buying into the quality of life issues or buying into helping pay for the lights. He also noted that the overtime issue should be carefully reviewed. With regards to the ordinances and resolutions being introduced at the next meeting, he felt that there should be more of an explanation as to what the chapters are about.

George Wallace, 22 Chesterfield Road, expressed his concern on the issue of the lights at Cottone Field and asked if anyone had to go to Planning & Zoning to request permission for the lights at last Friday night's game. He explained that lights were used at another night game two years ago, and Mr. Cottone had to go through Planning & Zoning and a Church Street resident was told that it was a "one time deal" with the lights.

Councilor Manousos responded to George Wallace that he was just a messenger for the Committee.

George Wallace was concerned with Mrs. Kopecki's presentation of her trip to Japan. He noted that the children in school today are not told the atrocities that happened in World War II.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented that Councilor Drake made a good point when talking about overtime issues. He also inquired as to who makes the decision as to where sidewalks are placed. He and his wife had taken a walk on the south side of Church Street when the sidewalk ended even though there were still houses down the street.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on the amount of money that the Lights Committee has collected to date, and questioned whether it was appropriate to take money and making commitments on school property and thought that perhaps it should not be done on school property. Mr. Young also noted the different costs and expenditures that were brought up earlier. He noted that there will be additional costs and the Town should not be funding entertainment.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 p.m. Councilor Hurley moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Deputy Mayor Console. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approve by vote of Council
November 15, 2010